



Early Achievers Participant Operating Guidelines—Update

December 16, 2013

The following changes to Early Achievers policies apply to current and future Early Achievers participants and are **effective on January 1, 2014**. The sections of the [Early Achievers Participant Operating Guidelines](#) that are affected by these changes are referenced below. The text highlighted in yellow indicates new language added to the Operating Guidelines.

Update #1: Changes to the Early Achievers Rating Appeal Process

- Change of the method of submitting rating appeal
- Clarification of the time frame and deadline to submit the rating appeal form
- Change of the DEL personnel involved in the steps to appeal an Early Achievers rating

Sections of the Operating Guidelines affected by this change:

Section VII. Evaluation and Rating: (pg. 40-42)

--Subsection h – Rating Appeals

v. How to initiate a rating appeal

v. How to initiate a rating appeal:

[The Early Achievers Rating Appeal Form](#) and supporting documentation must be received by DEL no later than 5:00pm Pacific Standard Time (PST) of the 30th calendar day following the rating release. DEL assumes no responsibility for delays caused by any mail delivery service. Materials received after 5:00 pm PST on the 30th calendar day will not be considered. ~~Facility must complete the following steps within 30 days of receipt of Early Achievers Rating Report.~~ Receipt of Early Achievers ratings is defined as the date that Early Achievers Rating Reports are released to facilities through the WELS Provider Portal. The Primary QRIS Contact will access the Rating Report in the WELS Provider Portal through their MERIT/Early Achievers Tab (Section 5; part g).

Please note: In order to protect the integrity of the rating appeal process and ensure that all facility information is fully considered, all communication with the Department of Early Learning regarding a specific facility rating appeal must be handled through the formal rating appeal process outlined below.

1. Facility Primary QRIS Contact communicates concerns with Regional Coordinator. The Regional Coordinator will review the Early Achievers Quality Standards with the facility to address misunderstandings or questions about *general* ratings calculations.

Note: Regional Coordinators cannot address specific concerns about facility's Rating Report. This initial step is intended to help facilities clarify how ratings are calculated in general based on the Quality Standards, which may prevent the need for rating appeal.

2. If the facility still has concerns, the Primary QRIS Contact will complete the *Early Achievers Rating Appeal Form* and attach detailed **written** information including:
 - Description of why the facility practice **at the time of evaluation** should have earned at least one Level higher based on Early Achievers Quality Standards components (e.g., from Level 3 to Level 4)
 - Documentation and evidence of facility practice specific to *each* Quality Standard component under dispute
 - Date(s) of communication with Regional Coordinator
 - A copy of completed Post-Visit Survey, and if applicable, date(s) of communication with UW, and outcome of survey feedback. Participants may request a copy of their completed survey from their Community Liaison.
3. Primary QRIS Contact will submit completed *Early Achievers Rating Appeal Form* to the ~~DEL QRIS Manager~~. QRIS Inbox: gris@del.wa.gov. If you prefer, you may mail in the appeal form and supporting documentation. Appeals that are mailed must be sent as certified mail at the participant's expense to the following address: Department of Early Learning Attention: QRIS Support Services, PO Box 40970, Olympia, WA 98504-0970.

i. DEL's Rating appeal resolution process:

1. The ~~QRIS Administrator~~ ~~Manager~~ will review facility Early Achievers Rating Appeal Form and may request additional documentation from facility and/or partners including UW Evaluation Team and facility's Regional Coordinator.
2. The ~~QRIS Administrator~~ ~~Manager~~ will make an initial decision within 10 business days of receiving all necessary documents and information to make decision. Written notification of decision will be sent to facility.
3. If the facility disagrees with decision, the facility must respond in writing either by **email or certified mail** within 10 business days from date of DEL decision.

Correspondence must be received by DEL no later than 5:00pm PST, of the 10th business day from the date of the DEL decision. DEL assumes no responsibility for delays caused by any mail delivery service.

4. The **QRIS Administrator Manager** will summarize facility appeal and initial DEL decision and submit to the **QRIS Administrator DEL Assistant Director of Quality Practice and Professional Growth** for review within 10 business days.
5. DEL will notify facility of final decision in writing.
6. If Rating Appeal is granted:
 - If it is determined that an error was made in calculation, the scores will be adjusted and the facility will be issued an updated Rating Report. Facility participation status on DEL's website will be updated if applicable.
 - In the case that the appeal outcome requires a re-rating, DEL will contact the UW Evaluation Team to initiate an on-site evaluation for a re-rating.
Note: In case of re-rating due to founded rating appeal, no new facility documentation or evidence that was not available during original on-site visits will be reviewed.
7. If appeal is denied:
 - Facility will be notified in writing of decision including information about why the appeal was denied. Facility rating will remain valid for three years from the date rating was issued.
8. While a facility is in process of rating appeal:
 - All Early Achievers services including coaching and distribution of Quality Improvement Awards will be put on hold until final rating appeal decision.

Update #2: Changes/clarifications to child enrollment requirements for On-Site Evaluation

- Clarification of how low enrollment affects a facility's on-site evaluation
- Addition of requirements for children who attend on a drop-in basis

Sections of the Operating Guidelines affected by this change:

Section III – Eligibility (pg. 6)

--Subsection b – Child Enrollment Requirements

ii. On-site evaluation

ii. On-site evaluation:

- There must be a minimum of three children birth to 5 enrolled and present in each classroom at the time of the on-site evaluation for facility rating in order for an assessment and subsequent rating to take place.
- If a facility requests an onsite- evaluation and does not have three children enrolled and present when the data collection team arrives, the onsite-evaluation ~~may~~ will be cancelled and the facility will remain a Level 2. The facility will be required to wait a minimum of one applicant cohort before they are considered eligible to receive another evaluation visit.
- Facilities must demonstrate that they have three children enrolled and present per classroom prior to a 2nd data collection visit. Regional Coordinators cannot approve onsite-evaluation requests for facilities that do not meet this requirement.
- If a second data collection is scheduled and there is not a minimum of three children present when the data collection team arrives, the facility must wait a minimum of one year before a 3rd request for onsite-evaluation will be considered.
- Children who attend on a regular basis (at least once per week) can be included in the enrollment target. Families who have children enrolled in a program regularly for a minimum of one day a week must complete an [Early Achievers Parent Consent Form](#).
- Children who attend less than one day per week, on a drop-in basis, will not have their files reviewed during the records review process. Families of these children must be notified of the facilities participation in Early Achievers and be alerted to the possibility that a data collector will be conducting observations in the child's classroom. The facility is responsible for notifying these families either verbally or in writing. The Community Liaison should help facilities identify the files of children who do not attend the program regularly to prevent data collectors from inadvertently reviewing them. Information about drop-in children and how the files are identified should be included in the Rating Readiness Tool (RRT).